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# 7 ways losers win

You have spent months preparing. Your game has improved. You know your strengths and weaknesses. You are conditioned and fit.

Your first game you almost blow. You start strongly and then let up a bit. You don't give up, but just ease up on the pedal. Your opponent pulls ahead and you have to dig deep for the win. Lesson learned, you drive into game two and win the match easily.

The next match isn't so easy. Your opponent shouldn't be in your division...he is too good, and everyone hates a sand bagger! You dig in hard and give it everything you have. Unfortunately it isn't enough. You can't quite find a way to get past him. When you look to your coach/fans you see it in their eyes-game over.

Your third match should be easy. You are better than your opponent. You know his game. You both play your best, and it is an epic match. You both strain your bodies to the limits (boy will you hurt tomorrow). You go up strongly in all three games, but just can't close it out. Your opponent just wants it more.

Three matches, one win, and you are out.

This weekend I played in the TX regional racquetball tournament. Results were mixed. Compared to last year we were vastly improved. I finished about where I should have based on my skill and ranking. That being said, I did not win. In fact, I lost a game I should have won.

That being said, I took several life lessons out of it. I am a strong believer in learning from every experience. I never view it as a failure because I can always learn something. This weekend I learned seven things that can be applied to any part of your life:

1. **Measure your performance to see the improvement:** I have improved dramatically. Last year I entered at the same level. I thought my game was good. I quickly found out how wrong I was. I did not belong in this division. In fact, I was not good enough for the next division down. This year was a different story. I did not do as well as I liked (expect the best but plan for the worst). That being said, my skill had improved to the point that I belonged at that level. One of the reasons I enjoy tournaments is that I can gauge my improvement.
2. **Small, incremental improvements interspaced with major leaps forward:** I am a firm believer in continuous improvement. Every time I practice or play, I have a skill in mind that needs work. It is usually a minor improvement. Just 1% more accurate. Just 2% harder. Just 1% smarter. This is compound interest applied to personal development. Over a year, it results in a 372% improvement. That is only taking into consideration a 1% improvement playing/practicing an average of twice a week. Imagine how far you can go if you make that 2% every day of your life. This doesn't take into consideration the occasional leap forward. Every once in a while something clicks. You now "get it." Maybe it is understanding court position better. Maybe it is swing mechanics. It doesn't matter what it is because you suddenly leap forward. You move up as much as all the minor improvements combined.
3. **Don't let up:** I almost lost my first match because I eased up. It isn't like I started playing left handed. I just went from giving it 110% to about 95%. In my third match I couldn't close the deal. My opponent played harder the closer I got to winning. He wanted it more and it was enough for him to beat me.
4. **Attitude is everything:** My wife watched my son play in his finals with me. She pointed out that he looked to me on every missed shot. I was shaking my head or telling him what he did wrong. What he needed from me was support. He was having trouble getting his head in the game. He needed me to help him get his attitude right. I flashed back to past matches where I needed support. I missed a shot. My opponent was pulling ahead. I look up to the crowd and see my son shaking his head. I see my friends putting their heads down in frustration. Wow, what a paradigm shifter! I changed my approach and gave him love and support. I focused on the positive and what he wanted to do, not on what he was doing wrong. The results were magical. He came back in game two and almost tied it up. He won the tie breaker and the match. My third match-the one I should have won-was a mental loss. I had a positive attitude, but it was defensive. You could say it was kind of positive. I was thinking "I am up 13 to 7. I only need two points to win." I wasn't thinking about losing, but I wasn't determined to win either. My opponent was, and he was able to pull a win. And your attitude is contagious. Your attitude doesn't just affect your performance, it affects everyone around you. Look at my son's match. When I was critiquing his game in my mind it pulled him down. When I was focusing on the

positive and being 100% supportive it helped him get his mind back in the game.

5. **Relax:** You play your best when you are loose and relaxed. Tension only gets in the way of performance. It also takes away from your enjoyment.
6. **Enjoy the process:** The best part of the game is that I love it. I love the challenge. I love learning new skills and improving old ones. I love meeting new friends, and getting a chance to see old ones. While I enjoy winning, it isn't the reason I do this.
7. **Take time to learn the lesson:** Life will throw the same lesson at you time and time again until you learn it. Take time to review your results. What did you do right? How could you improve? Then relive the experience as if you did it perfectly. Absorb the lesson, and then let it all go. It is time to move on!

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